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“What we have here is a general broadly hinting to the American people: ‘Don’t worry about that crazy idiot you elected. He has to get past us good guys.’”
— **COSH, A14**

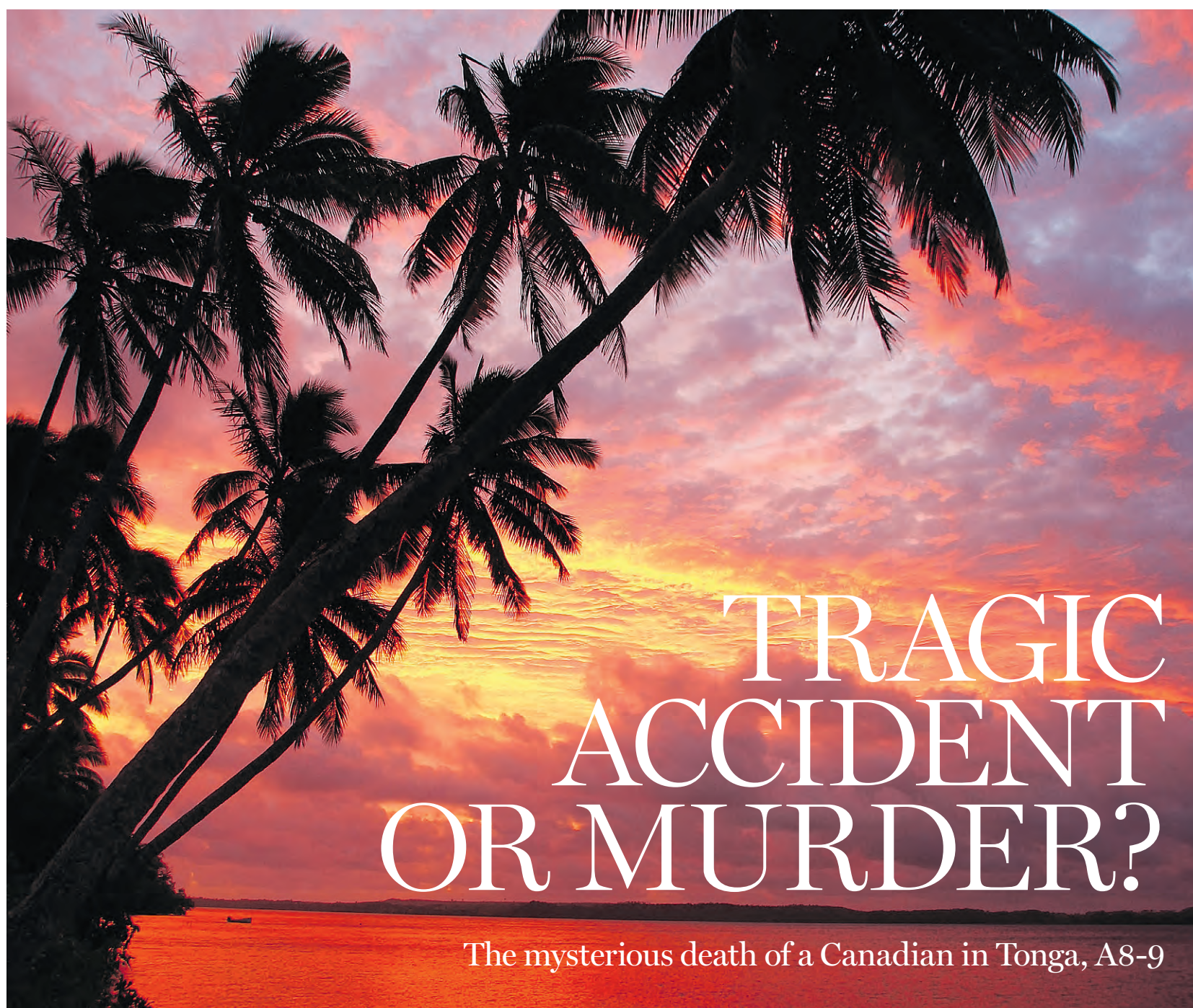
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TRAGIC ACCIDENT OR MURDER?

The mysterious death of a Canadian in Tonga, A8-9

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MEET THE FIRST NATIONS LOBBYING FOR ENERGY PROJECTS THEY BELIEVE WILL IMPROVE LIVES, NOT DESTROY THEM

ANDREW COYNE ON WHETHER VOTERS NOW REALIZE THE LIMITS OF THE PM’S POWERS

Through their first year in office, the federal Liberals sailed aloft in the public opinion polls — at more than 45 per cent, on average, roughly 20 points ahead of their Conservative rivals. Since then, however, their support has dropped markedly, while the Tories have gained ground. The latest polls now have the two only about five points apart.

This seems odd. For all the while Liberal support has been slipping, the economy has been roaring ahead. Over the last half of 2016 and first half of 2017, real GDP grew by 4.2 per cent, the fastest 12-month growth rate since 2000. Unemployment, at 6.3 per cent, is not far off its mid-2000s lows. Yet here the Liberals are, despite the hot economy, at distinctly lukewarm levels of support.

What explains this seeming anomaly? Isn’t the economy supposed to be the decisive factor in voting intentions? One possibility is that it isn’t: that in fact political preferences are influenced by all sorts of things, of which the economy is only one, albeit the predominant.

A second possibility is that people don’t believe the numbers: either they don’t feel as prosperous as all that, or they don’t think it will last. It seems hard to argue with the data on rising median incomes and record household net worth. Then again, the public has been told often enough that, notwithstanding the statistics, middle-class incomes are still lagging, or feel as if they are — maybe they’ve come to believe it.

See COYNE on Page A4

‘We were right on the cusp of First Nations in my region being able to look after themselves,’ laments Ellis Ross.
Claudia Cattaneo, Page FP1

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